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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

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U. S. Department of Agriculture
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Subject: "ACCENT ON VITAMINS A AND D." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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I've been reading a report of the world's eating habits. Do you know that the average diet of the world is deficient? Do you know that people in the United States and Europe do not eat enough mineral- and vitamin-bearing food? That skimmed milk and separated milk are not properly appreciated?

Well, those are some of the facts reported by 12 nutrition experts delegated by the Health Committee of the League of Nations to investigate the eating habits of the world. Dr. Mary Schwartz Rose of Columbia University recently made the report public. Doctor Rose, with Professor E. V. McCollum and Dr. W. Sebrell (See-brell), were the three American nutrition experts asked to help prepare the report. The others represented Austria, the United Kingdom, France, Scandinavia, and the Soviet Union.

Now what interested me particularly was the statement that people in the United States do not eat enough vitamin-bearing foods. We talk enough about vitamins -- just last week we heard a report on vitamin research from the federal Bureau of Home Economics -- but evidently we don't put what we know into practice, or rather into good meals.

Be that as it may, today I have another report from the federal Bureau of Home Economics, concerning foods that supply vitamins A and D. Quoting directly:

"Nutritionists have found that Vitamin A is necessary not only for growth and development of the body generally, but in particular to keep the linings in good condition -- membranes of the nose, sinuses, throat, lungs, and the digestive tract. Vitamin A is one of the vitamins the body can store up, but when foods providing it are lacking long enough to deplete the body's store, the membranes lose resistance to infection, and trouble sets in.

"However, there need be no lack of vitamin A if you choose the right foods, and use them often enough. The best sources of vitamin A among the animal foods are -- liver, egg yolks, butter, cream cheese, cheddar cheese, cream, salmon (fresh or canned), cod liver oil and other fish liver oils. Among the vegetables -- greens of all kinds, and the green parts (but not the white parts) of lettuce, cabbage, and other leafy salad vegetables, green peppers, green peas, green beans; carrots, sweetpotatoes, yellow squash, and tomatoes. Then for the fruits -- apricots, prunes, and yellow peaches. So much for vitamin A.

"Now vitamin D presents a very different problem. Like vitamin A, it occurs in certain animal fats and oils -- but not very many foods are rich in vitamin D. Richest of all are such oily fish as salmon and sardines. Eggs and butter are comparatively good sources, though variable. Liver, cream, milk and oysters contain a little. But at best, the quantity of vitamin D that can be had in the common foods under ordinary conditions is not very great. There is another source of vitamin D, and that is sunlight -- or rather, the ultra-violet rays in the sunlight.

"The discovery of these facts had important results for children. It was known that undernourished babies, and little children shut off from the sunshine in city tenement districts, commonly had rickets -- a disease of the bones, which left such children bow-legged, 'chicken-breasted', or otherwise deformed for life. Milk helps to prevent this condition, because of the bone-making materials -- calcium and phosphorus. But milk alone will not do it. Something else is needed, something to help the child's body use the bone-making materials milk supplies -- in other words, vitamin D, which must be supplied in the children's foods if they do not get enough sunshine. Nowadays, therefore, to prevent rickets, nutritionists say: Feed the child plenty of milk, plus some good vitamin D-rich food -- for milk ordinarily contains only a little of this vitamin. Give the child plenty of outdoor sunshine, too, of course.

"But what shall be used as a food rich in vitamin D? Doctors and nutritionists alike have said cod-liver oil, which furnishes the important vitamin A also -- and cod liver oil has become a more or less regular part of the child's diet nowadays.

"Other ways of providing vitamin D in foods have been discovered. Cow's milk can be enriched with this vitamin, and 'vitamin D milk' is on the market like other milk. All products of this kind are of course subject to inspection, not only for ordinary wholesomeness but to prevent deception by false labeling.

"Vitamin D for adults is not much of a question. Their bones are built, and if they get plenty of outdoor sunshine, the small amounts of vitamin D they get in the milk, butter, eggs, salmon, sardines, and liver they eat are probably all they need, nutritionists say. Not sunshine through window panes, however, or through any other glass, unless it is the kind of glass especially manufactured to let the ultra-violet rays come through. Outdoor sunshine, however, cannot be improved upon.

"For both these vitamins, then -- vitamins A and D -- we look to certain foods of animal origin: Eggs, butter, cream, cheese, milk, liver, kidney, salmon and some other fish, also cod liver oil. For vitamin A we look also to green and yellow vegetables and yellow fruits. For vitamin D, we look to direct sunshine, as well as to the foods already mentioned, to cod-liver oil, and to milk enriched with vitamin D."

And that, homemakers, is the end of today's report from the Bureau of Home Economics, on Vitamins A and D.

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